

432 Sgdn., 17th Bomb. Gp.

A.P.O. 520 - 9 Postm. - N.Y.C.

July 30, 1943

Mya Folks, -

Here goes for a start on what is destined to be my weekly letter! - That is, if I can keep this cigar under control and write too. - Last week we were given 4 cigars in what is technically known as our "weekly rations". - Actually, we only get them once a week, sometimes! - However, the last two weeks have been fruitful weeks, so why say anything? - Our rations are "PX" stuff. - We have to buy them, of course - but like you in the states - we are rationed on what we can buy, by whatever rations the sgdn. is able to obtain for ration purposes. - Some weeks we can get soap, writing paper, cigars, cigarettes, pipe tobacco - 3 or 4 packages of gum - 1 bar or 2 of some 5¢ candy. This past week - no candy or gum or tobacco, whereas last week - we ~~had~~ had 3 bars of peanut brittle! - You never know - just get what you can.

I guess the high point of our last

week was the party, we gave ourselves
Our sqdn gave one party for our enlisted
men - and several days later - another one
just for the officers of the sqdn. - 'Course -
we all chipped in for it. - so - we gave
ourselves a party!

First - several weeks ago - we sent a
plane to Cairo for a little "firewater" not
of the native kind. - The British have quite
a bit that they ration to the men but
the American Army goes dry. - Anyway -
we had the results of the Cairo trip.
hired a hall in town, - set up a bar, got
an orchestra, - invited some nurses and
local French girls - and as there was no
mission the following day - declared it a
legal holiday! - Don't know when we've
all had such a good time. - It ended up
practically a stag affair, as only 6 nurses
showed up - and the French gals were
ignored mostly. - If you had seen them
you would have understood why! - Ugh!
Anyway - all the officers forgot themselves
and as all were known to each other -
and all had shared the same dangers, there
was no compunction of holding oneself
down. -!

You should have seen it. - all the way

2/ them flying - a night where there was plenty to drink has been known as - "a wet front". Well, it was definitely a wet front and everyone was on instruments you know how a radio range is equipped to send out an "A" and an "N" signal to guide the flyers - to keep them on the beam, so to speak? - Well, what else could you expect of a bunch of airmen. - Someone stood on either side of the door leading to the bar - one on one side saying ^{"A"} ^{dit Tah}, and the one on the other side saying ^{"N"} ^{Tah dit}! Stuff like that was happening all evening and it was too funny for words. - It's something you'd just have to see to appreciate! Some of the boys could play musical instruments - so they got in the band and played the instruments - some lots better than the musicians in the orchestra! None got really drunk - just well oiled. -!- That is, only one or two got really drunk. When they began to show signs of their liquor - the Major just mentioned to them that he thought they'd had enough - and to go back to camp. - He always sent 'em home with a couple of others in a jeep just to make sure they got home and to bed O.K. - Nothing rough or boisterous!

You needn't worry about me, either. ^{While} I wasn't a bystander in all the fun, - I ended up as driver of one of the jeeps so you can see I wasn't misbehaving? I also got up courage and asked one of the nurses for a date - a tentative one, - but as yet I haven't fulfilled it. I've been wondering what the heck one would do on a date in North Africa?

Say - you should see all the mail I got today - 12 letters all told. - 1 from the Calif. Loops, - 1 from Lewis & Nancy, - 1 from Brother, 6 from Sister, 2 from Fred and a package of V-mails from Sister - the one with the pencil lead in it. The last and some of the others were forwarded from B.T.C. but most of Sister's, 1 of Fred's and Brother's were ~~always~~ addressed directly here -! - (The fellows are all talking around here so don't be surprised if I start writing the conversation down.) Guess from now on my mail will be mostly on schedule, so you had better write often to keep me from "itching". - Oh, yes - also to those letters - add a couple of Birthday cards! - For me! Pretty good timing for such long.

3/ range mailing! - Thanks so much and don't think I don't know you will be with me in thoughts! - Even if I will have to sing "Happy Birthday to me"! This thing of singing that song to myself is getting to be a habit. - Maybe one of these years I'll be where you all can sing it - and I'll just do the listening! - This year - I'll even go a little farther - I'll wish myself - many more birthdays to come, - and I mean it!

Today - has really been our day. - Our Sqdn. had ice-cream for dinner desert! He sent the ingredients into town where it was made up and frozen for us. of course - we sent enough for 20 gals. and only got 5 gals out of it! - But it was good! - The first time in months that I've even seen the stuff! - Couldn't eat it at first - just sat there eyeing it for a couple of minutes - but when it started melting I went into "high blow" and really went into action!

- Saturday - 3/6/41.

Had to stop last night. - It came time for the show to start. - We have an open air movie and recently we've had

a show every night. - As last night, I had seen it before, but that's a small matter over here. - Most of them are so old I've forgotten them anyway. - Everyone takes an old oil can - a blanket, and that's their seat! - Naturally, the first to come get the closer seats, so as it's a 16 mm. film - the crowd starts early. - Some at least 2 hrs. before it gets dark enough to start the show. - The pictures as I say - are reduced down from regular movies to make shipping easier - and all carry a beginning caption that states something to the effect it is being shown for the Armed Forces over-seas by the Motion Picture Industry, and at no cost to the War Dept. - A noble thought?!

Bought a small grass rug in town last time I was in. - Now I can walk around in the tent and not have the ground stinging under my feet! - You'd be surprised at how much ~~of~~ more of a pleasing atmosphere it gives. - That and my "rag toes" for foot lockers - I'll soon have all the comforts of civilization, by gosh!

A new way to get rich quick! - The

4/ natives around here are sure reaping
a harvest. Cantilopes are now in season
and they bring them around camp for
a killing - We have finally gotten the
prices down to 18 and 20 paces a kilo -
(36 to 40 cents for 2.2 lbs.) - but even then
a fair size melon will ~~cost~~ cost at least
40 cents! - It's a shame in a way - Some
of us try to get prices down to normal -
but there's always someone who will pay
their prices so there's nothing left to
do but meet them or do without - So!!
If these natives aren't rich by the
time the war is over I'll never know
why! A normal weeks (average) of 2 suits
of khaki - some shorts & socks usually
runs from 4 to 6 dollars - and we even
furnish the soap! - See what I mean?

Say - don't you know what plane
I fly or did the California branch get
it mixed up? - In their letter they
asked if I was a pilot or copilot in
a P-38 (a twin engine - single seat pursuit
ship!). Maybe they thought that just
because P-38's are made in Los Angeles,
I must fly them! - Oh well - I didn't use
to know planes by their designation

numbers, - so guess I'll have to excuse them!

Just been up flying again - This time we practised flying on just one engine - !. It's not bad, - but back in the states - flying our type plane on one engine was practically unheard of. - In fact, even over here, we can't get our "crew chiefs" or any members to go up with us when they know we're going to practice "single engine". - Don't blame them I guess - but it's something we have to keep our hand in. - You never know when you might have to come home that way - and it's foolish to lose a plane + crew just thru neglect on the pilot's part to familiarize himself with the procedures. - I still maintain we can't know too much about our plane.

Boy, - I was counting up my flying time the other day. - I've now got ~~over~~ over 500 hrs. That's a lot of flying when you stop to realize all the time I flew back in Cuba only amounted to about 60 hrs! How did you ever have enough nerve to go up with me, Ma, when I only had less than 40 hrs? - A brave person! The more

5/ time I ~~to~~ can get the, the better I'll like it. - for it is chiefly thru your flying time that they rate your experience. - ask Illie if she would still take a trip with me in a plane? -

Oh - in Lewis and Nancy's letter - they mentioned that Jack Rosendall had been taken a prisoner of War by the Germans during the African campaign. - Don't know how they knew - but thought you might like the news on him.

Poor ol' "Sham" takes a beating. - We get canned meat so much and it's the bourn of everyone when we see it and don't happen to be feeling in exactly a good mood. - The latest statement I heard was the other day. - Some one saw "Sham" was the meal, and turned to the person next to him and said, - "you know - I heard the other day that when a ship is torpedoed, - the Sham on board is fixed so it won't sink with the ship. - It has a device that allows it to float so other ships can pick it up and bring it on to us."

- Well. - guess it's time to sign off for this time. I'll drop you a V mail

when I can think of something more
to say. - Now that I have Vmail, ah
Bye now - and be good -

Love,
Frank